

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of
Connecticut
Before the Public Health Committee**

March 8, 2013

In Support of

**Proposed H.B. 5740 AN ACT CONCERNING UNIFORM STANDARDS AND THE
PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS.**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director for Adults, State and National matters with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Connecticut. NAMI Connecticut is the state affiliate of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental illness. NAMI Connecticut offers support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for improved services, more humane treatment and an end to stigma and economic and social discrimination. We represent individuals who actually live with mental illness and parents and family members of individuals living with mental illness. I am here today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to support HB 5740 An Act Concerning Uniform Standards and the Provision of Mental Health Services at School-Based Health Centers.

This bill would provide uniform standards for school-based health centers that include the provision of mental health services and require the school nurse to work collaboratively as part of the school-based health center.

We support this bill as school-based health centers are vital to the early identification of behavioral, emotional and social challenges students may face, in combination with appropriate and accessible interventions provided in a structure that decreases stigma and allows students to have little interruption in their school day. In fact, school-based health centers provide mental health services to thousands of students each year.¹

¹ Jesse White-Frese. Meeting the Health Care Needs of Children and Adolescents: School-Based Health Centers in Connecticut. Keep the Promise Coalition Children's Committee and Hamden Public Schools School-Based Mental Health Summit. January 25, 2012.

Uniform high standards for all school-based health centers that include the provision of mental health services would ensure all students receive high quality care regardless in which location they receive their services. Collaboration between school nurses and school-based health centers would allow for a better continuum of care and consistent treatment, leading to better outcomes.